

Congress. In 1977 I had the opportunity to travel to Egypt with Jim to meet with the leader of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. In my Congressional Office I still have the picture of Jim and myself in the traditional Arab headdress—I smile every time I see it. It brings back fond memories of my old pal.

Again I thank the Gentleman from New Jersey, for reserving this time.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to the Honorable Jim Howard, former Member of the House of Representatives, and Chair of the then Committee on Public Works and Transportation, now the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

My tribute to Jim's memory has to do with his chairmanship of the Public Works Committee, where he served from 1975 to 1988. This tribute comes from the fact that when I first began my tenure in the House in 1976, as a twenty-seven year old freshman, I chose the Public Works Committee as the major committee I most wanted to join, and having done so I have remained on the Committee for nearly 22 years.

Jim Howard's stewardship of that committee, and the strength and courage of his convictions concerning the importance of this nation's infrastructure, and of our duty to see that it was funded, will always be with me.

As we are poised to vote on the reauthorization of the Federal Highway bill, known as BESTEA, in the coming days, I am reminded even more of the on-the-job training I received under Jim's leadership, which as served me so very well over the years.

During Jim's chairmanship of the Committee, he guarded its jurisdiction with all of his being—which was considerable. It was Jim Howard who was responsible for the passage of the 55-mile per hour national speed limit, the first legislation to focus attention on the relationship between speed and safety.

I was mindful of that fact when, in 1995 during floor consideration of the National Highway System Designation Act, as I tried in vain to preserve that 55-mile per hour speed limit. I wondered at the time whether Jim Howard was watching and listening as the speed limit was raised to ever more dangerous levels nationwide. I continue to believe that Jim was right, and that his 55-miles per hour limit that had stood the test of time as a mandate that prevented the deaths of many innocent victims around the country, should have remained in force.

Chairman Jim Howard was a champion of all the issues over which his committee had jurisdiction, not just highways—from Clean Air to Clean Water, from Mass Transit to Airport and Airway Improvement, and from motor carrier safety to groundwater protection.

As I mentioned above, in the next week when we again meet on the floor of the House to reauthorize the federal highway legislation, I will draw strength from remembering that Jim Howard did not shrink from a floor fight over legislation he believed was in the nation's interest.

I know that he will be watching over us as we carry on with the legacy he left for all of us and for the nation by enacting BESTEA, again focusing attention on our country's infrastructure and environment.

This special order tonight, and our action to enact BESTEA this week or next, will go far in assuring that Jim Howard's role as a National legislator is not forgotten.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OBERSTAR addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICAN SCHOOLS ARE SAFER FROM RELIGION THAN FROM DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, people throughout this Nation are being denied a fundamental right, the right to freely express their religious beliefs. It is a shame that I have reason to make that statement here in the United States in the year 1998, but it is a sad fact. Please allow me to list a few examples.

One example, a judge ruled in favor of a teacher who gave a young Tennessee student an F on a research paper, simply because she decided to write the paper about Jesus. On three separate occasions, St. Louis school system officials put a fourth grade student in detention for bowing his head to say a private prayer over lunch.

Mr. Speaker, students from schools across the country have been prohibited from bringing the best-selling book in America to school, the Bible. At the same time, the Justice Department reports that 100,000 young people bring guns to school every day. It is a sad commentary on our Nation to say that our schools are safer from religion than they are from illegal drugs.

Mr. Speaker, this country was built upon Judeo-Christian values. I believe we are in real trouble now that we have reached a time when, sadly, those values are being attacked and not protected. Every American, our children in their formative years especially, should be allowed to freely explore and express their religious beliefs that include voluntary school prayer.

My good friend, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ERNEST ISTOOK) recognized this fact, and has seen the many threats to religious liberties in this Nation. He has taken action. I am proud to be part of the team of over 150 co-sponsors, Democrat and Republican, supporting the religious liberty amendment proposed by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK). I believe it is the right step to protect one of our most fundamental rights which has been so frequently infringed upon recently.

The religious freedom amendment corrects court actions and trends which have suppressed religious expressions. It will permit student-initiated procedures in public schools. The proposal retains the First Amendment safeguard against official religion and keeps school prayer voluntary, but protects it, just as other forms of free speech are protected.

Specifically, if approved by a two-thirds margin of both Houses of Congress and ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the States, the religious freedom amendment will add the following words to the United States Constitution:

"To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: Neither the United States nor any State shall establish any official religion, but the people's right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. Neither the United States nor any State shall require any person to join in prayer or other religious activities, prescribe school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion."

I commend my good friend, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK), for presenting us with this opportunity to defend religious freedom in America, and for following the will of the people, as we in this Congress are elected to do.

Public opinion polls have shown time and time again that three-quarters of Americans support a constitutional amendment to allow voluntary prayer in public schools and to protect religious liberties. I urge my colleagues to listen to their constituents, and to join in this effort to protect the right of religious expression in America. Support House Joint Resolution 78.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DEAL of Georgia). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. EHRLICH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EHRLICH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)